

Oppose HB 6350 Section 11
Oppose the Elimination of the Legislative CT Commission on Aging
Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing
February 19, 2013

Submitted by:
Sherry Ostrout

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Sherry Ostrout. I am a Hartford resident. I am the Director of Government Initiatives at Connecticut Community Care, Inc. (CCCI). And, I am a volunteer member and Vice-Chair of this legislature's Commission on Aging. I am legislatively appointed to this legislative commission by Senate Majority Leader Martin Looney. I am honored to say so.

And, I am here today to express my opposition to the Governor's proposal to eliminate the Legislative Commission on Aging. It is one of the richest assets this legislature has.

CT's aging population is growing by leaps and bounds (while the younger population is decreasing). From 2006-2030, the older adult population will increase by 64%. We are already seeing the growing demand for long term services and supports; a growing need that will exceed current capacity. We are already challenged by the rising expenditures in Medicaid and State dollars towards long term care across the spectrum. The challenges are enormous but Connecticut has begun the process of change.

The Commission's research and analysis is invaluable. In fact, if you look in the footnotes of any substantive report about CT specific aging policy – you will see the work of the Commission on Aging. It has staffed both the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and the Aging in Place Task Force, both legislative initiatives that are improving lives. The Commission has also brought together philanthropy, municipal elected officials and employees, legislators and the executive branch program leaders such as Money Follows the Person to begin a conversation about creating livable communities for all ages. In a State that has 169 independently governed towns and cities, with unique charm, culture and politics – this is a challenge – the Commission on Aging is continuing this statewide conversation at the local levels.

And, regarding Money Follows the Person, the largest systems change project in CT's history that is shifting supports and services to the community and away from costly institutional care. The Commission on Aging serves as the impartial facilitator to the only public stakeholder advisory group to this large scale effort affirming the distinct roles and authority of the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch of government, ensuring transparency, accountability and that public input remains meaningful.

And, with this shift to community care in a booming aging population the home and community personal care workforce is inadequate to meet demand, unprepared and fragmented. Again,

the Commission on Aging, Chair of the Money Follows the Person Workforce Development sub-committee continues to bring together workforce development organizations, investment boards, community colleges, consumers, employers and State Departments and has developed, through consensus, CT's Strategic Plan for Workforce Development – supported in the Governor's budget for implementation.

This Legislative Commission on Aging has saved the state millions of dollars through their research and recommendations. If they have failed at anything, it is self promotion. If the CT Commission on Aging is eliminated – the loss of this unique leadership of office, impartiality and dedicated focus will be profound. I ask that you oppose the elimination of the Commission on Aging.